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DO 770 United Methodist Theology

Stephen A. Seamands

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United Methodist Theology

Fall 1998

I. Purpose: The course seeks to introduce students to the content and development of Methodist Theology from the time of Wesley to the present. Following an assessment of the current state of Methodist Theology as it is reflected in the 1972 and 1988 Doctrinal Statements and current theological issues such as God-language, baptism, and homosexuality which United Methodists are wrestling with, we will move back to Wesley to determine the character of Methodist theology, and then forward through Methodist history to show how its character is reflected in its major movements and principal figures.

We will also consider the possibility of theological and spiritual renewal within Methodism.

II. Objectives: By the end of this course students will:

A. Understand the current state of Methodist theology and some of the major theological issues United Methodists are wrestling with today.

B. Be able to identify the major figures and themes in the development of Methodist theology since Wesley.

C. Have examined, evaluated, and used a reasonable range of literature relating to the study of Methodist theology.

D. Be able to better understand and dialogue with United Methodists adhering to various theological viewpoints.

III. Textbooks:

William Abraham, *Waking from Doctrinal Amnesia*

Thomas Langford, *Practical Divinity*

Stephen Seamands, *Holiness of Heart and Life*

Thomas Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow: Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate*

IV. Requirements:

A. Regular **ATTENDANCE** and active participation in class sessions.

B. Three 250-word (1 page doublespaced typed) **RESPONSE PAPERS**.

1. The first response paper will be based on your reading of *Waking from Doctrinal Amnesia* and will be **due on** _____. In your response answer the following question: What did I learn about the current state of UM theology from reading this text?

2. The second response paper will be based on your reading of *Straight and Narrow* and will be **due on** _____. In your response answer the following question: What did you find most helpful or illuminating about the author's discussion of the issue of homosexuality?

2. The third response paper will be based on your reading of *Holiness of Heart and Life* and is **due on** _____. In your response answer the following question: Which aspects of the author's formula for renewal did you find most crucial and helpful? Why?

B. One 750-word (3 page doublespaced typed) **RESPONSE PAPER**.

This response paper will be based on your reading of *Practical Divinity* and 100 pages of collateral reading from *Wesleyan Theology: A Sourcebook* (This book which is on reserve in the library consists of primary source material written by the theologians discussed in *Practical Divinity*. Choose any 100 pages from this text *except* pp. 1-20. Turn in a collateral reading report with your response paper to indicate which pages you read. This response paper is **due on** _____. In your response to these materials answer the following questions:

- a. What did I learn about Methodism's theological tradition from reading these materials?
- b. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of our tradition?
- c. Which theologian (exclusive of John Wesley) did you find most interesting? Why?

D. A final take-home **ESSAY EXAM** to be distributed on the first day of class and **due on** _____.

V. Course Outline:

- A. The Current State of UM Theology : The 1972 and 1988 Doctrinal Statements.
 - *Waking from Doctrinal Amnesia*
- B. Current Theological Issues United Methodists are Wrestling With: God-language; Baptism, Homosexuality.
 - *Straight and Narrow*
 - *By Water and the Spirit*
 -
- C. Wesley's Theological Legacy.
 - *Practical Divinity*
- D. Two 19th Century Movements: The Holiness Movement & the Social Gospel Movement
- E. Theological and Spiritual Renewal in Methodism
 - *Holiness of Heart and Life*